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## Let's get in gear

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*Sept. 14, 2008 12:00 AM*  
*The Arizona Republic*

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Arizonans lost out when farsighted initiatives on two critical issues, transportation and state trust land, failed.

The disappointment is all the deeper because both measures seemed bound to go to voters. Both had an adequate number of signatures on the initiative petitions.

For political strategists, the Monday-morning quarterbacking is just beginning. And there's plenty of material signatures disqualified in Maricopa County to the Arizona Supreme Court decision cutting off appeals.

The question is straightforward: How can we get these two proposals back in gear?

### Transportation

The TIME initiative, short for Transportation and Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy, would have asked for an increase in the sales tax, starting in 2010, to fund a wide range of projects. They included freeways, roads

The one possible silver lining, although TIME supporters will argue it, is that Arizona's lackluster economy tax increase from voters who are worried about their jobs and the cost of filling the tank.

The economic doldrums, reducing the number of people moving to Arizona, might seem to reduce the urgent needs. But with gas-tax revenues falling and the cost of materials rising, the state doesn't even have enough Federal funding, meanwhile, is shriveling. And we will grow, with a population of 12 million projected for 2020.

"This isn't one of those things where we could just sit on our hands and wait for a couple of years," says M campaign.

TIME supporters turned to the initiative process only after failing to persuade the Legislature to adopt a transportation refer one to the ballot. Fortunately, they haven't given up on the legislative strategy, which could give the lawmakers must make sure transportation proposals get discussed instead of getting held up in committee.

The TIME proposal was complex, and this is an opportunity to consider tune-ups.

The sales-tax increase, for instance, was just one of 28 sources of revenue considered by the Vision 21 Task Force. Toll roads is worth revisiting. They aren't the whole solution, but if the idea flies with Arizonans, they could be part of the initiative envisioned.

The horizon for transportation projects could be shortened to 20 years instead of 30.

The \$42 billion list of transportation needs should be reanalyzed. Critics objected to the way TIME earmarked local mobility projects, saying it just spread around the dollars to garner support. Shultz argues that local cities need a statewide system. It's a premise that deserves a close look.

## State trust land

The disqualified initiative, Our Land, Our Schools, would have reformed the nearly century-old system of state trust land. It would have preserved more than 570,000 acres with rich scenic, habitat and cultural value. The Department of Education has the resources to develop the remaining trust land more profitably. That's a plus for us all, because it would fund education.

Even the most optimistic Pollyanna would have trouble detecting a silver lining in the failure of this proposal.

The need for trust-land reform has been blindingly obvious for years. Arizona has no legal mechanism for identifying and preserving spots that clearly shouldn't be developed. They include places that most Arizonans assume are already protected, such as landmark Picacho Peak and the foothills of the Superstition Mountains.

Trust land was given to Arizona by the federal government at statehood as a way to raise money for public schools. The Land Department clearly needs more money and authority to sell and lease parcels for maximum value.

Various efforts at trust-land reform have failed over the years either because they were too complicated or too expensive.

But this initiative got it right. It was a clean, straightforward proposal with few opponents. It doesn't need time to be proven.

Pat Graham, director of the Arizona chapter of the Nature Conservancy, says that supporters are looking for a silver lining. That's a good idea, because trust land is widely misunderstood. Many people think it's *already* protected and doesn't need reform.

The current pause in Arizona's economy and real estate-development shouldn't lull anyone into thinking that trust-land reform or better transportation funding is a distant dream.

The solutions to these issues suffered a setback, not a defeat. It's not too soon to put pedal to the metal to get back on track.

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